

Nurturing Connections: A Gym Owner's Experience At CWA Meetings San Francisco

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in [CWA Blog](#)



A few months ago, the CWA held a professional development event at the Planet Granite in San Francisco – part of the [CWA Meetings](#) regional events program. As the owner of a brand-new gym trying to figure out how to be a gym owner, routesetter, and instructor all at the same time, I was excited for the opportunity to connect with and learn from other professionals in the industry.

There were so many things that I took away from the experience, but one of my favorite parts was just being in a room full of other people who are just as passionate as I am about the indoor climbing experience. It was nice meeting, learning from, and connecting with industry professionals representing every gym in the Bay Area and even as far as Tahoe. There was even one person who came from overseas to attend this event.

There were three different content tracks that we could choose to attend during the event. They were the management/operations staff track, the routesetters track, and the adult/youth instructors track.

As someone who is involved in all those aspects at [Oaktown Boulders](#), I wanted to attend all of them! But I ended up choosing the management track. Oaktown Boulders is a very young company, so as we continue to grow and the industry continues to evolve, I wanted to learn how to build a strong foundation in the business operations side.

On day one of the event, the business operations workshop was led by Chris Stevenson, former Red Ranger of the Power Rangers. Now, he owns and operates Stevenson Fitness, which consistently rates very high in customer reviews in the world of fitness clubs. In these sessions, we not only learned about his journey of starting the business, but also all the important lessons

he learned along the way before becoming so successful.

Chris really emphasized that the reason his club is so successful is because of how they treat their customers and clients. Their number one priority is to provide a good experience for their members. Chris gave us great methods to not only measure [member experience](#), but also how to enhance the member experience at our own gyms. This was especially pertinent to me — Oaktown Boulders is very young, and it made me realize how important it is to make the member experience core to our gym from the very beginning.

On the second day of the event, I hopped tracks and attended the breakout session for coaches and instructors led by Patrick Brehm of the Headwall Group. In this session, Patrick led us through how to have effective program planning at our gym. He shared creative games and exercises that he has used with kids before and we talked about how we can implement these in our programs. We then put the lesson into action and created plans for our own programs.

It was so much fun being a part of this session because everyone was so passionate about their own kids and youth programs. Collaborating and sharing fun games that we've done with the kids to keep them engaged and learning was my favorite part. I've already been able to try out a few of these games with our youth team at Oaktown Boulders and it's been a huge success.

Overall, the [CWA Meeting in San Francisco](#) was an amazing opportunity to meet others in the industry and be re-inspired by everyone there who shares the same mission—to improve the experience of the members at their gym. Leaving the event, I had a renewed sense of hope for the future of the sport because there are such caring and amazing people behind the scenes trying to make it better.

Going back to work, I feel equipped and excited to start implementing all the things I learned to grow Oaktown Boulders and make it a truly wonderful and unique community.

About The Author



why he opened Oaktown Boulders.

Alex Chuong was born and raised in Oakland, CA. After going away for college at UC Davis, he came back to Oakland and got into rock climbing, which has been a huge part of his life ever since. When the opportunity to start routesetting and coaching at the climbing gym that he frequented opened up, he jumped at the chance to give back to the community that had given him so much over the years. As he worked at the gym and watched this sport change people's lives, he realized that there was a huge need for something like this in his neighborhood back in Oakland, which is



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